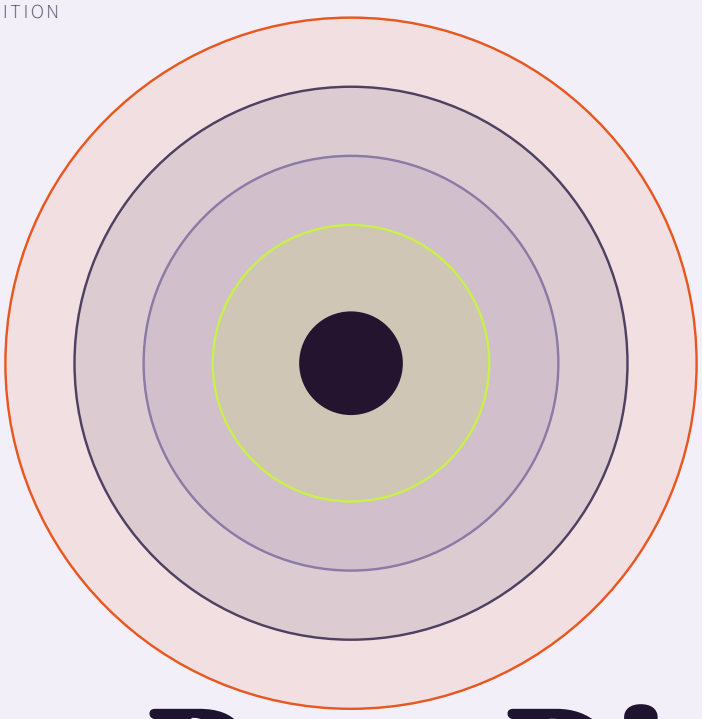


Eat to Beat Disease: The New Science of How Your Body Can Heal Itself

A reading of the book by William W. Li (2019)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of Eat to Beat Disease: The New Science of How Your Body Can Heal Itself, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

William W. Li is a physician and scientist, and president and a founder of the Angiogenesis Foundation; much of his research career has centred on how the body grows and prunes blood vessels. In Eat to Beat Disease he argues that the body runs five health defence systems (angiogenesis, regeneration, the microbiome, DNA protection and immunity) and that everyday foods can help or hinder each one. The book moves in three parts: how the systems work, the studies Li reads as evidence for food's effect on them, and a plan for putting that on the plate. The plan is his 5x5x5 framework: choose five foods you enjoy that between them touch all five systems, and eat them across the day's meals and snacks. Li discusses more than 200 foods and drinks, from tomatoes and green tea to dark chocolate and fermented foods, and puts the stress on adding good foods rather than banning others. Much of the evidence he cites comes from laboratory, animal and population studies rather than trials that prove cause and effect.

Below are the 9 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Your body is already defending itself, and food is one of the ways you can help it.

Li starts from health, not disease. He describes five systems that work quietly all the time: angiogenesis, regeneration, the microbiome, DNA protection and immunity. In his account, illness tends to take hold when one of them slips, so the question becomes what keeps each one working.

2

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Blood vessel growth needs balance: too little and tissue starves, too much and a tumour gets fed.

Angiogenesis is Li's own research field. He shows how too little vessel growth shows up in wounds that will not heal and in heart disease, while too much helps cancers grow and drives some eye diseases. His claim is that certain foods help keep the system in balance rather than pushing it one way.

3

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Add before you subtract.

The book spends far more time on foods to bring in than on foods to cut out, and Li builds the plan around foods you already enjoy. HourLife's reading: a plan like that is one you can keep, which a list of bans rarely is.

4

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

One food can serve several defences at once.

Green tea, berries, walnuts and olive oil turn up on more than one of the book's lists. That overlap is what makes the 5x5x5 framework easy in practice: a handful of well-chosen foods can cover all five systems in a day.

5

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Your gut bacteria are part of your defences, and they eat what you eat.

Li treats the microbiome as a defence system in its own right, tied to digestion, immunity and more. He points to fibre-rich plants and fermented foods such as kimchi, sauerkraut, yoghurt and sourdough as ways to feed it.

6

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Your repair crew responds to how you live.

Regeneration is the work of stem cells that replace and repair tissue. Li argues that diet and habits can strengthen or weaken them: he names smoking, high blood sugar and diets heavy in fat, salt and sugar as harms, and lists foods such as dark chocolate, tea and berries among those he says can help.

7

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Think of food in doses: how much, and how often.

Li gives rough doses for many foods, drawn from the studies he cites: how much, and how often. They are useful as a guide to what a normal portion habit might look like, not as a prescription.

8

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Your kitchen decides what you eat before you are hungry.

The final part of the book turns from science to practice: the 5x5x5 framework, kitchen equipment, sample menus and recipes. HourLife's advice: stock the foods on your list where they are easiest to reach, because a plan that lives only in your head loses to whatever is on the counter.

9

HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Read the food science as a nudge, not a guarantee.

Many of the links in the book come from lab, animal and population studies, which can show an association but not prove that a food prevents a disease. The safe reading is to eat more whole plants and fewer processed foods, and never to treat food as a replacement for medical care.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Write your 5x5x5 list
- [ ] Restock one shelf
- [ ] Find a fermented food you like
- [ ] Plan two tomato dinners
- [ ] Check big changes with your clinician

KEEP UP DAILY

- ◯ Count the five each evening
- ◯ Swap one snack a day
- ◯ Make one drink count

30 days · Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

Write your 5x5x5 list

Pick five foods you already enjoy that between them touch all five defence systems.

Use the planner on this page, then put the list on the fridge.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

Restock one shelf

Clear one shelf or drawer and fill it with foods from your list: a tin of tomatoes, a bag of walnuts, a box of green tea, a jar of kimchi.

Make it the first place you look when you are hungry.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

Find a fermented food you like

Buy two this week from yoghurt, kefir, kimchi, sauerkraut or miso.

Keep the one you would happily eat again and drop the other.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

Plan two tomato dinners

Put two meals with cooked tomatoes on this week's plan, such as a pasta sauce or shakshuka.

Cook a double batch of sauce and freeze half.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

Check big changes with your clinician

If you have a condition, take regular medicines or are pregnant, raise any big change in diet with your doctor or a dietitian first.

Some foods, grapefruit among them, interact with common drugs.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Count the five each evening

Look back at what you ate and tick off the systems it touched.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
9 ○	10 ○	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Swap one snack a day

Replace one packaged snack with a handful of walnuts, a bowl of berries or a square of dark chocolate.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Make one drink count

Have a cup of green tea or coffee in place of a sugary drink once a day, if caffeine suits you.

Nov 6 - Dec 5, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6 ○	7 ○	8 ○
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December 2026

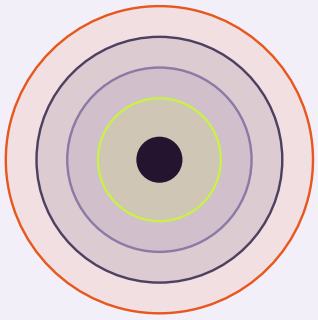
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Five foods you already like, spread across the day, will do more for you than a perfect diet you drop by Friday.

HOURLIFE NOTE AFTER WILLIAM W. LI